

DEC. 90
V.14 N.4

Via Pacis



Looking For the Gift of Love

The holidays area upon us once again, and like so many times before I am filled with mixed emotions. The kids make me feel peace and love. The commercial world makes me feel dread and unhappiness. It's too bad that the world couldn't view the coming holidays as a time for peace, love and good will towards men. Instead of hate, war, and meanness toward or neighbor.

I feel mixed up when so many people come and want to know what toys kids want. It would be so much better if people came and played with kids or took them looking at sites or just read them a story. I have children and understand that some people think that giving toys to kids is a form of holiday spirit. But I try to tell my kids the real meaning of Christmas is to give love and to remember that the baby Jesus was born on Christmas to bring love and joy to the world.

With all the T.V. commercials showing war toys and nintendos it gets pretty hard to find joy and love in the world.

But like all good and bad things Christmas will be over soon and I will look back and think how many little kids got the presents they wanted and how many were left feeling let down and sad. I pray that some kids have come to realize that Christmas is not measured in how many toys you received or in how much money you have but in peace, love, and understanding that the world is a better place because of them and a baby that was sent long ago so we could find hope.

by Carla Dawson



House Blessing

It was wonderful to see Bishop Dingman House filled with people on November 4 at the House Blessing! I didn't count how many people came, but I know that we filled the living room, dining room, and kitchen easily...plus plenty of kids running around outside.

After people arrived, Father Frank Cordaro and Father David Phelen led us in Mass and the house blessing. Father Frank stopped by the day before the house blessing just as Grinnell College students were helping us clean up the house one more time. There were hugs and reacquainting with Father Frank as he was returning home after a six month prison sentence for crossing the line at SAC.

Of course at the house blessing there was more reacquainting and hugs as well as music provided by Ed Fallon and food for everyone. Special thanks to those who brought food to share and everyone who supports us at the house blessing and the rest of the year.

Welcome Back Frank

Father Frank, Sonny, just Frank, friend Cordaro, special friend to us here at the Catholic Worker finally came back to us from a six month imprisonment. As so many of you know, Frank was jailed for again crossing the line at the SAC Air Force Base near Omaha, Nebraska. For myself, a pacifist who feels strongly the need for non-violent civil disobedience Franks commitment and time served strengthens my own resolve.

Frank got out of jail the end of October. He served his time in two county jails, about 3 months in Sarpy county jail in Nebraska, then he was sent to a county jail in southeastern South Dakota. In a county jail your access to people, reading material and exercise is quite limited.

Frank was able to keep in touch with us with weekly phone calls and he wrote a weekly letter/ liturgy that was photo-copied and mailed out to friends, family and supporters. We saw Frank just last week when he dropped by to help us support the people arrested at the military processing station. He is returning to Logan, Iowa to his parish, after all, he's just a country priest.

Presentations

One of the ways we can spread the word about who we are and what we do is by doing presentations. We really enjoy doing these talks, many times when folks come by to visit or to bring by some food or such, we don't really have a chance to sit down and talk. These presentations give us an opportunity to give people a perspective of who Dorothy Day was and how her work is continued in Des Moines.

Please consider us when planning agendas for your church or school groups...We really appreciate it. Call us if you want us to put you on our calander--Bishop Dingman House, 243-0765.



Volunteers Help with Home Improvements

The Catholic Worker house is actually not A house but 3 houses, and on any given day about 100 people go in and out, seriously, that' not an exaggeration. With the 45 or so people that live here and stay with us there are the folks that come to eat, use the phone, borrow some soap, wash thier clothes, friends that come to visit, I could go on and on, but as you see with this kind of traffic, our houses are always in need of some improvement and repair.

With just the six of us in community, it wouldn't take long before the place was a total wreck if we didn't have people help us out. Help comes in many ways, churches and schools, organize work groups that will come for an afternoon, sometimes somebody will just show up and ask if we have anything to do. We have old friends that have helped us out for many years, some folks come by once and we never even get their names.

We would like to thank everyone that has helped us out this Fall, and hope that you feel our apprectiation for all you have done for us.

THANKS!

Drake Newman Community

Caleb, Scott, Debbie
Dan, Reo, and all
their friends

Sacred Heart

Sherry Barret
Plymouth Congregational Church

Father Bill and all the folks from Clarion

Father David

Barry and Marie Molloy

Buffy

Williams for finishing the sidewalk, it started to snow just as he was putting in the last brick.

Around the House

A lot of faces showed up at the Dingman house house blessing. There were old friends, old community members, new friends and new community members. It is my hope that everyone got to know one another and to know us. Even though Carla, Carol, Corey and I have been here for over a year, I know some of the old friends still think of us as new comers, and any opportunity that brings us together to share our work here at the Catholic Worker is a good thing.

Some of the other new faces that you might see around here are folks from the Brethren Volunteer Service. The folks that come to us from BVS stay with us for one year. They room and board with us splitting thier work between the Iowa Peace Network and us. We have worked with BVS for many years and it seems to be working out.

Thomas Taylor, who worked with us during the past year decided to continue working for the BVS service and left to continue his service in Geneva, Switzerland. Thomas, Corey and a Grennell student, Scott Whitstruck, got into a fundraising speech given by George Bush, last month. Thier chants "No blood for oil" stopped the Presidents speech, and led to their arrest. Thier arrests, along with some other demonstrations that happened in that same week, gave a national message of resistance to the Gulf occupations. Thomas was lucky to get his legal matters cleared up the week before he left. We wish Thomas a safe journey, and thank him not only for helping us out but sharing his insights with us.

Molly Youngkin started her service with us the first week in October, and will be with us for this following year. She's already Stinky's (Carla's little boy) best friend, and actually we all like her alot. In her capapcities with us and IPN, Molly was able to be one of the organizers of the demonsration at the Military Processing station, and was one of the fourteen arrested that night. Molly is just such a neat person, we are very grateful to have her stay with us. We have decided to work out the same kind of arrangement with CND (Campaign for Nuclear Dissarmament) which will give us another BVS'er. Albrecht Kastevmann will join us in December. He's staying with Ed Fallon temporarily, and has been helping us out with the house and doing some arrands for us. He is from the northern part of Germany and will be splitting his time between us and CND.

Georg Busseck is also a BVS'er who has been living with us fr well over a year, his service will end in the middle of December. Georg, a concientuos objector from Germany, worked for CND, and helped us out over the year. He says he will travel some before going home. He said it will be hard to leave so he wants to do it slowly. I know I will really miss him.

Sometimes its hard to write the house article, the main stay of every community paper, because it is so easy to slip into this gossip tone and the writer soon comes to the conclusion that this is probably the least read column in the paper, so if I may restate the purpose of these sentences; **THIS IS WHO WE ARE, FOLKS!**

When you visit us here at the Worker these are the folks that you will talk to, this is what's going on in our lives, and most importantly, this is how we do our work. We do the best that we can, even though mistakes are made. Please read the house articles so you can know us better. Even better come and visit.

Right now the thing we are the most happy about is Carla's new baby, which is due in two weeks, or as we like to think of it, almost any time. Even though she moves a little slowly she is still taking the house, doing presentations, and keeping up on her concerns for the people of central America. Her two little boys, Joshua "Stink" and Julius are doing well, too. Stink is talking, learning a few new words every week, and Julius is doing good work in his first grade class.

Carol is taking to the gas fast surprisingly well. She hasn't been in a car for nearly two months, and it always surprises me how far she travels and actually how little time it takes for her to get around. Carol and I have been particularly pained by our court sentenced ban on doing any C.D. Although the ban ends in about a month, we have been feeling the importance of haveing visable strong resistance to the Gulf occupation now. Carol has been very active with the People for Mid -East Peace and wMith war becoming more and more a reality, we all will become more active.

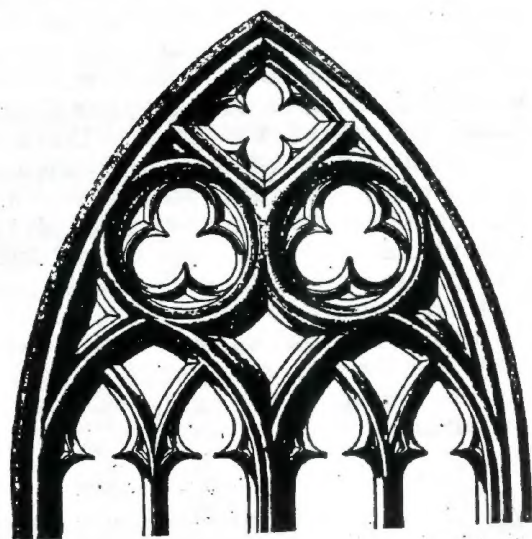
One of the hazards of riding a bike just hit Cory tonight; he was hit by a car. He is amazingly unhurt, but looking at the wreckage will convince the most stubborn the importance of wearing a helmet, in this case the helmet saved Cory from very serious injury. Cory's vision of a gas fast is taking on new supporters all the time, starting with 12 pledges 2 months ago, it has grown to 60+ pledges from all around the state. Besides the fast, Cory is also very active in helping to organize the Des Moines peace community into action, at a time when it is most needed.

Day to day our houses are busy and folks are coming and going as usual. We have had a full house for many months now and with Christmas coming we will only get fuller and busier. We have 8 churches that bring us supper each month, and we have had some volenteers that have popped in to help us out. Drake Newman, how can we ever thank you guys?, pitched in to help us get a BRAND NEW stove and oven. It takes a special person to look through the chaos of loud kids, crowded rooms and cluttered kitchen to see the real work that goes on here, and reach out to give us a hand.

Norman has decided to get a taste of the real world by getting an real full time job, I know he misses not being around, but every so once in a while we need cash too! Normans' truck needs some repair and he has talked of going east to visit, so he got a job to help pay for his expenses. He's looking forward to Christmas more than any of us, although we are all looking to having a meaningful holiday season.

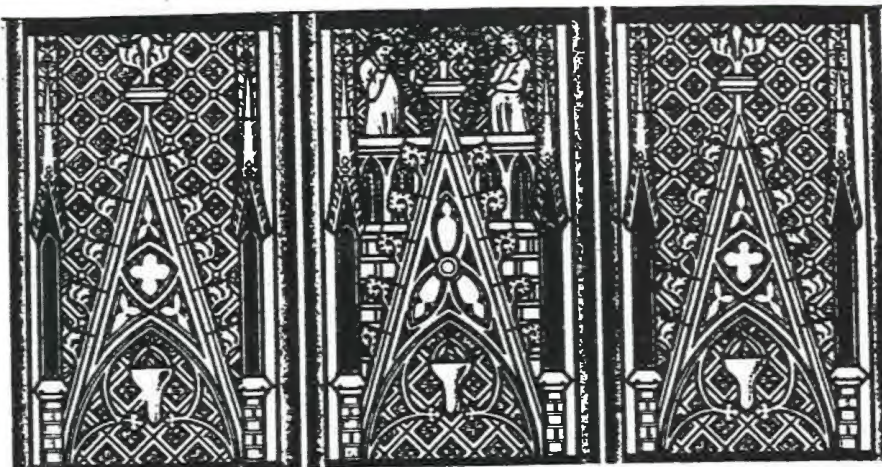
As for myself, I have been keeping a pretty low profile here, and I have been spending more time trying to put my fractured family back together, so I have been giving myself alot of quiet time, getting the garden ready for spring, and homeschooling the boys. The Catholic Worker is still my home and family so I'm never really that far away.

We here at the Catholic Worker want to especially wish you all a meaningful holiday. Happy holidays are fairly easy to obtain, but this year we hope to turn more inward and look to putting a real spirit and soul into this most beautiful time of year.



No Room

by Corey Hardin



1. If the situation is such that Emergency Housing is necessary, the Resource Manager will:

a. Check on the "board" to find out whether a unit is available, the Resource Manager will contact the Building Manager to inform the manager of the client's arrival.

b. Housing Request Referral Sheet (PC 53).

1) Section I of the Referral Sheet shall be completed and signed by the Resource Manager. The client must also sign the Referral Sheet. Three copies of the Referral shall be made and distributed as follows:

a) The original is sent to the Housing Coordinator.

b) One copy is given to the client who presents it to the building manager for admission into the Emergency Housing unit.

c) The third copy is retained by the Resource Manager and put into the client's case record.

2) Section II of the Referral Sheet shall be completed and signed by the Housing Coordinator.

c. The Resource Manager shall explain the rules of Emergency Housing to the client. It should be emphasized the Emergency Shelter is a temporary arrangement intended only to give the client time to find an alternative arrangement. It must be understood that locating housing is the responsibility of the client not Polk County.

d. Agreement to Reimburse (PC 425)

1) Three copies of the Agreement to Reimburse PC 425 must then be completed and signed by the client. Distribution will be as follows....

The above is an excerpt from the Polk County Department of Social Services General Relief Manual, pg. 36-37. It describes roughly half of the procedure required to house a homeless person. I honestly do not know if that is what actually happens when a person goes into the General Relief office seeking shelter. Frankly, I doubt that is. In the roughly year and half that I have been at the worker I can honestly say that I have had no direct knowledge of anyone ever being housed at the "Emergency Shelter Unit." Last winter when, after a rash of shelter closings, we found ourselves to be the only option in Des Moines for homeless families and sought a meeting with the county supervisors about what could be done we had to ask if such a "unit" still existed. We were told that it did, but when we asked if we could obtain a copy of guidelines on getting someone into it, we were told that the manual from which I just quoted did not exist. I got a copy from a friend who was willing to let me borrow it just long enough to xerox it. I couldn't take for longer, because he knew that it was the only one he was every going to get, the county being inexplicably reluctant to circulate it.

Having obtained this manual I must confess that I am no more enlightened about who General Relief will help and who they won't than I was before I got it. It is stuffed full of procedures which I have never heard of and eligibilities which I have never seen granted. For instance, according to the manual every rejected client is entitled to a written rejection. I know lots of folks who have been rejected, but none of them ever got a written rejection. I wouldn't know what a written rejection looked like if it walked up and bit me on the ass. Of course I can understand the reluctance of case workers to generate the absurd amount of paper work required of them, nonetheless the lack of written rejection is problematic. When I have tried to explain to county officials that people who should be eligible are being rejected they ask me to prove it by showing them the written rejection. If I respond by saying that the persons in question received an oral rejection, they cite the manual (which may or may not exist) to prove that they don't give oral rejections. They do give oral rejection. Actually, one of the very few things about General Relief procedures which I can verify from my own experience is that they do give oral rejections.

Now, in fairness to Polk County, it is possible that a disproportionate share of the people we see come to us after having already been rejecting by General Relief. Just maybe there are dozens of folks being housed that I simply never met. I certainly do have a wealth of experience with folks who have been rejected. The trouble is that is very difficult to determine if they have been 'properly' rejected. As an example, the county has an after-hours system whereby if all privately run shelters or hospitality houses are full, a night duty worker can be contacted who will provide a voucher to put the people up in a motel. After numerous heated phone conversations with after-hours duty workers and volunteers, I know that this system will not pay to put a couple up in a motel, the preferred option being to split them up, one to a mission for single men, one to a mission for single women. However, when I complain about this policy to General Relief director Bill Pritmyer, he swears up and down that there is no policy to split up couples. I am at loss to explain the discrepancy.

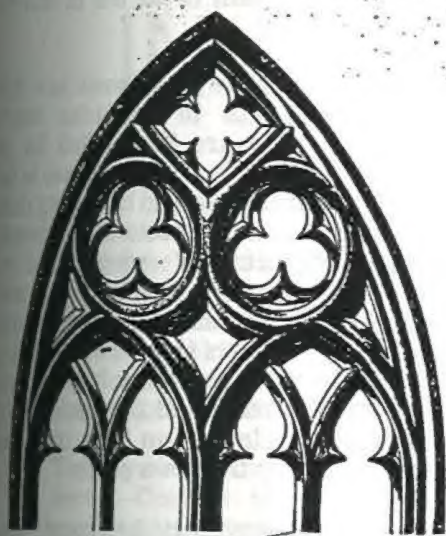
Roughly three weeks ago I recieved a call from a man with AIDS who had managed to get himself enrolled in a treatment program at the Federal Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, Ga. He had family in Atlanta and therefore a place to stay, he needed only about \$160 for a bus ticket. He was from Des Moines so I knew he didn't qualify for Traveler's Aid. However, it seemed absurd that he should miss out on the treatment for the lack of \$160. The community at that point had only about \$49 in the bank, so we were in no position to help. Knowing of no other source for the money, I went ahead and called United Way to see if I could convince Traveller's Aid to make an exception. The volunteer who answered the phone, upon finding out that the man was from Des Moines, explained to me that Traveller's Aid was not for local who wished to travel out of town. I tried to convince her that this was surely an exceptional case. She simply said that her rule sheet was very clear on the point, then she added, "and its underlined!"

There are plenty of other horror stories to share, but I think that the bottom line is clear from these, the current system is a mess. On any given night in Des Moines chances are that we personally know of a number of people who are sleeping in cars or under bridges. We have a grand total of three rooms for couples at our house, the New Life center has a couple more. The county will do nothing for couples, so this means that of the people sleeping outside, a healthy percentage are couples who were presented with the option of splitting up or sleeping outside.

Our meetings with county officials about the problem have utterly useless, and that's generous. I greatly cheered to see that one of the supervisors we have met with, 'Red' Brannon, failed to win his primary. This leaves Martha Willits as the only serving supervisor to have directly rejected our appeals. Unfortunately, I have no reason to think that the new supervisors will be any better. On two occasions I have been involved in attempts to bring this matter directly to the attention of Governor Brandstad. The first time was during a question and answer period during speech he made at Grinnell college. Our dear friend Caleb Rush asked the governor how he could justify having vetoed over 13 million dollars in appropriations for housing, given the deplorable situation in Iowa. Gov. Brandstad's only response was to explain that he grew up poor on a farm and had to do chores every morning. I checked with a friend who also grew up in Iowa and was told that are precious few "poor" farms in the part of the state that the Governor hails from, at any rate I fail to see the relevance.

The second occasion was at the Governor's conference on Housing and Homelessness. This conference, asked for by housing activists over a year ago, was coincidentally scheduled shortly before an election. To demonstrate his sensitivity the Governor asked Housing and Urban Development director Jack Kemp to keynote the conference. Hard as it is to believe, Sec. Kemp has presided over HUD budgets even smaller than those under tyhe Reagan administrations. While in town he announced that a new bill in congress would provide additional money for housing to Iowa. Two days after he left HUD announced that they were increasing the cost of FHA loans to new home buyers. During the Governors speech Caleb rose to try and raise the issue of the housing vetoes, and the questionable timing of the conference. After Caleb was escorted from the room by police, the Governor shared with the audience the fact that he grew up poor on a farm. During Sec. Kemp's speech I rose to inform him that thought his transparently political visit to Des Moines was an insult. I also was escorted to the city jail.

All of which leaves us exactly where we have always been. Even a relatively small city like Des Moines, in a relatively small state like Iowa, is completely unwilling to house all of its citizens. Obviously this must not be allowed to go on. I expect that we will take up the issue anew with the incoming board of supervisors, and Gov. Brandstad. I certainly would welcome the assistance of any of our friends who are willing. Our activism on this issue is stalled right now, so if you have any ideas or suggestions please call us at the Worker.



Just War



by Mark Rogness

In all the analyses of the current situation in Iraq, few have presented us with any discussion of what justifies war. Broader principles that oil supply or unchallenged aggression are at stake.

For Christians, the theology of a "Just War" has been around for a long time, stretching back to 400 A.D. Christians were basically pacifists prior to the Roman emperor Constantine's conversion to Christianity and the decree that Christianity was to be the state religion. Only Christians could serve in the army. In order to allow for the existence of the army, the state's version of Christianity had to allow for the possibility of a just war.

Drawing on such non-Christian writers as Plato and Cicero, St. Ambrose first enunciated the principles of a just war. St. Augustine and St. Thomas put forward arguments for a just war that remain basically intact for Catholics and Protestants. So without further ado, let's examine a U.S. led offensive war against Iraq against the requirements of a just war.

1. "It [the war] must be declared by a legitimate authority" (1). There is no legal way for our armies to cross into Iraq or Kuwait without the approval of Congress. Either we should show some respect for our Constitution or amend it to allow the President to declare war as has already happened in a de facto manner in Korea, Vietnam, Granada and Panama. Congress must spell out under what conditions our army can go on the offensive. A war without explicit congressional approval is immoral.

2. The cause must be just" (1). Causes of a just war are threefold: the nation must be defending itself against attack, preserving an order that benefits its citizens, or protecting the lives of innocent citizens. As regards the U.S., we are not under attack and a war with Iraq will not appreciably aid our citizens. Importantly, under just war theory, all citizens are considered innocent, including Iraqi. Deliberations on a just war with Iraq, therefore must consider the loss of ALL innocent lives.

3. There must be right intention or attitude" (1). A just war should not proceed from blind prejudice and anger, but from a careful consideration of the motives for war. After 15 years subtle propaganda in

the U.S. to get us to associate the word "Arab" with "terrorist," I wonder if it is possible for us to have a right attitude. Last August, I heard of over 30 airmen at the Grand Forks Air Base scream "Nuke Iraq." Had they thought through the devastation of such an act, the loss of innocent lives? St. Augustine believed that right attitude was one of the most important tenets of just war doctrine.

4. "It must be a last resort" (1). Sanctions, partial though they were, affected South Africa; they resulted in a slight loosening of the evils of apartheid. The U.S. government continues sanctions against Nicaragua and Cuba. If sanctions do work, then we should continue to rely on them in the case of Iraq. EVERY peaceful means to resolve international conflict must be tried before we go to war, period.

5. "There must be a reasonable hope for success" (1). I will not deny the possibility that we could militarily defeat Iraq, but on to number 6.

6. "The good likely to be achieved must outweigh the possible evil effects" (1). "This is the norm of proportionality. Even if a nation believes its prospects for winning a war are good -- the cost in terms of life and massive destruction may not warrant the conflict" (1). What does it gain humanity to see the feudal Kuwaiti princes back on their throne? Are 10 to 20 thousand dead U.S. soldiers (40 thousand wounded) worth an incapacitated Iraq? Is the life of even one U.S. soldier worth the death of Saddam Hussein?

7. "The right means must be employed in the conduct of war" (1). "This is the norm of discrimination. A nation is responsible for avoiding acts which show a wanton disregard for life. This means that there are legitimate and illegitimate military targets. The distinction between combatants and noncombatants must be observed" (1). The incineration of nonindustrial Nagasaki violated this principle; Japan had not had a chance to surrender so soon after Hiroshima. Our decision to bomb North Vietnam "back to the stone age" was a clear breach of the norm of discrimination. Many other examples exist from our war history. Will we repeat these mistakes in Iraq? We must

take care in confronting the ruthless and evil tactics of another nation that we ourselves do not become ruthless and evil.

Often, our actions affect our thinking more than our thinking affects our actions. If we allow our leaders to take us into war with Iraq, our thinking will change. In order to live with ourselves as a nation, we will end up retrofitting our morals to rationalize our actions.

I have listed some of the short term consequences of war, the loss of U.S. soldiers and innocent civilians on both sides of the conflict, including the hostages we are trying to save. Our generals say we will "paste Baghdad" and some governmental officials threaten nuclear war.

What about the long term consequences? To see them you need look no further than the homeless. You will find veterans who have suffered the consequences of war. Agent Orange has had an effect whether the government admits it or not. How many new refugees will a war create? Will we have to remain as a military presence in the Middle East for the next 20 years in order to preserve the peace (and the oil fields)?

There are basically three doctrines on war espoused by people who claim to be Christians. I reject outright the more rabid millennialist fundamentalists and their theory of a coming armageddon. That leaves pacifism and just war doctrine. Just war doctrine is the line in the sand that we as Christians cannot cross except at the risk of our immortal souls. Flawed though it may be, just war doctrine has been something that a flawed humanity has leaned on to keep from sinking deeper into the abyss. Something that has withstood high 16 centuries deserves some respect.

For those of you who are not pacifists, I earnestly beseech you to review tenets one through seven and ask yourself if you believe they all apply to the situation in Iraq. If they are not all fulfilled, then war with Iraq would be an unjust war and as a Christian you need not help that war. Further, you can actively and vocally oppose this war while not being against all wars. Let us pray, and act, for peace.

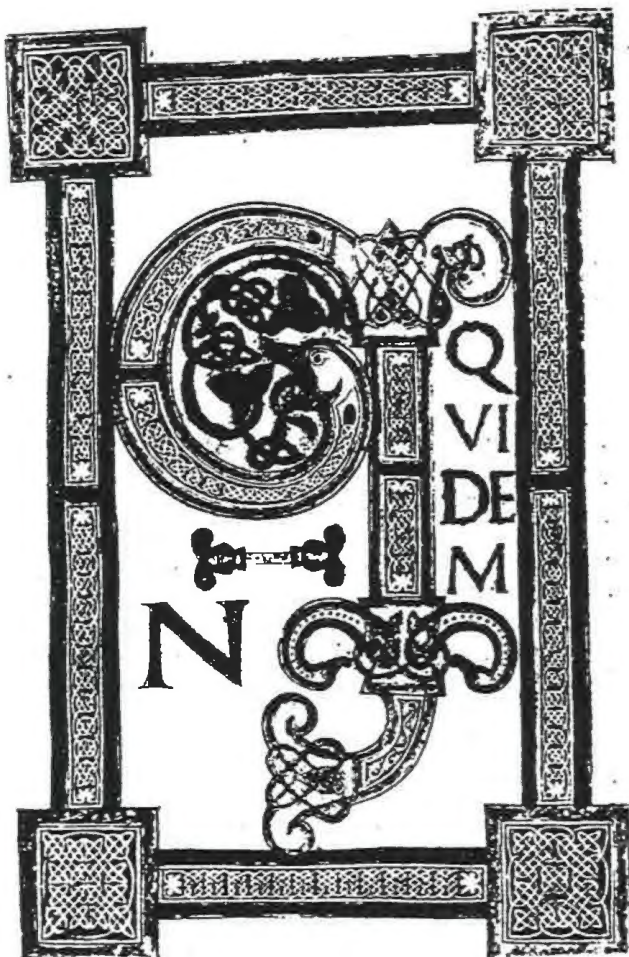


Norman's Whereabouts

I know that there are a lot of people who could use a lot more than prayers on Christmas Day. There are people that other human beings hardly ever see or get to know, but God sees them. These people live in the subways of New York city, in the alleys of Boston, on heat grills in Washington D.C., under bridges in Los Angeles, and in adbandon buildings in Des Moines. You'll find people living where ever they can find something that they can call home. I wish that Christmas would come more than once a year for these people.

We celebrate the births, birthdays, death, weddings, and holidays by giving. Why can't we give all the time? Why can't we always offer people peace and love? Why must we always limit our giving to giving with a price or as part of a deal? Why does remebering the past too often mean failing to forgive others?

We are reminded on Christmas night some two thousand years ago that a child was born in a barn. Three men appeared, strangers bearing gifts for the child. They gave him Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh. This child gave the world everything, even his own life. He taught those around him to love one another and be at peace with one another. His name was Jesus. He died for our sins.



It seems to me that too often we speak about peace and love only at Christmas. We should be peaceful and loving everyday. I realize that its hard to do, but in time we will do it.

Sometime I wish we could some how stop sending weapons to countries where innocent people are bing killed for no reason. Instead of sending them war in the form of weapons we should be sending them peace in the form of doctors and nurses, food and medicine. We whould heal the wounded and tend the sick. We should send them teachers to educate, carpenters and construction workers to build what needs to be built, and teach others how to build things; and priests and business men to teach the people how to keep their own country going by their own people.

People should keep their own countries for themselves, without the United States making a profit in the sense of material wealth or power. The only profit we should accept is the gift of friendship--like the American Indians and the early settlers before settlers got so greedy. It seems to me that we have a great wealth in this country, yet we don't really share it.

Even as the world falls apart around us we're not sharing and we're not really listening to each other because we all want something. For example, in the Mideast some people say the war is over oil, some people say its over finding a home for the Palistinians, some say it's apowere struggle. Whatever the reason is, it's not worth it. We must learn to teaach peace and love now, not tomorrow. Well, Merry Christmas!

Out of the Mouths of Babes

WINTER.

Snow is fun.
You can build snowmen.
I can scoop snow off the sidewalk and sometimes we play snowball fights.
Sometimes we go sledding downhill.
My hands get very cold but it is fun.

Kary

Halloween is fun.
I like candy and carmel corn.
You can see your neighbors on Halloween.
You see lots of ghosts and monsters. Some of them are my friends.
Julius



Baptism

One time at mass some of the kids were getting baptised. Father Frank talked to us about getting baptised. Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist and Jesus helped people and cured sick people. Jesus died but rose from the dead. Getting baptised opens your soul to Jesus. Finally it was time for the kids to get baptised. Frank called Julius Johnson up, He poured water on Julius' head then he said you may go back to your seat now. Frank did two more kids. I did not get baptised because I am a Quaker. After the kids got baptised we did mass. BY JANN

our needs

Dry Beans
Tomato Products
Cheese
Fresh Fruit and Vegetables
Cooking Oil
Coffee
Juice
Shampoo
Cleaning Supplies
Garbage Bags
money
Volunteers

Mass Schedule

Dec. 7 Fr. Cordaro
Dec. 16 (A reading of the Christmas story in lieu of Mass)
Dec. 21 Fr. Cordaro

THE UNCOMFORT IN LIVING

by Molly Youngkin

In March 1972 when Father Theodore Hesburgh, president of Notre Dame University, awarded Dorothy Day the Laetare medal he said, "Dorothy Day has been comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable all her life."

This is not the first time I have heard this saying--Comfort the afflicted, afflict the comfortable. I first heard it when a friend, Rev. Sidney Lovett mentioned it in a sermon a few years ago. I don't remember the context in which he said it, but I liked what he said. And I remembered it. I think I even scribbled it on the back of my church bulletin and saved it.

My father claims that he heard this saying while attending Union Theological Seminary, and my mother directed me to the source of the slogan, a book by Pierre Berton called *The Comfortable Pew*. Pierre Berton compares modern Christianity, "a useful tool for Peace of Mind and Positive Thinking," to "true" Christianity, a "difficult, dangerous, radical, uncomfortable, shattering" way of living.

While I form my ideas about life from many non-biblical sources, I do think that the uncomfortable struggle that Pierre Berton describes applies to me. I like to make others a bit troubled by raising questions, arguments, or another point-of-view...but I also need to make myself flinch, think twice, or just feel a little uncomfortable. Since coming to the Catholic Worker in October, I've found that no matter where I live, it's always a struggle.

One of the hardest struggles here is to learn to live in the "everydayness of life." Since I spent almost eighteen years of my life enrolled in school--preschool at age two, elementary and middle school, high school, and college--I learned to live on academic time. Academic time meant that I could live my life according to schedules, deadlines, pressure, and stress...and I got really good at living this kind of lifestyle! There are many reasons that I left Grinnell College without a degree, but I especially missed living in "everydayness." I wasn't even sure that I knew what "everydayness" was, but I missed it. At the Catholic Worker I've begun to struggle with how to look at things every single day, not just on a 14-week-a-semester schedule. I struggle to make dinner for 30 people when I'm on the house. I struggle to build relationships with people around me. I struggle to figure out a balance between house "rules" and listening to requests and questions and demands and expectations from other people. I struggle with all these things that make me uncomfortable sometimes, but they are things that I cannot avoid here.

Then there are the gracious surprises, times when I've struggled with an uncomfortable thought or situation and then realized that I handled the situation OK or that I can do something that I didn't think I could do. Recently, I've wanted to teach myself to draw. I've always been comfortable with writing; I liked doing it and my lifestyle (school) encouraged it. But I was afraid to draw despite my love for painting and drawing at a young age. Besides, art didn't have a place in my education after second grade and it was easy to avoid making time to draw or paint. About a month ago I started drawing and painting again. At first I used a technique that Betty Edwards introduces in her book *Drawing On the*

Right Side of Your Brain. She suggests copying line drawings UPSIDE DOWN because it forces your brain to think about the shape of lines, not about what object you are drawing. So I did this for the first month. This week I tried my first "right side up" drawing, a jar of dried flowers in my room. It worked! I was able to draw a picture that looked similar to the real thing. A gracious surprise that came out of my uncomfortableness. There are other surprises too at the Catholic Worker...like when I realize that I can tell a volunteer a little bit about the Catholic Worker movement or when I feel confident about some of my beliefs about the military and war and feel like I can articulate them.

There's a story that I heard my father tell once and it seems to remind me again and again about my need to make others and myself uncomfortable. It's the story of Jacob and Esau in Genesis 32.

Jacob, who is disguised as his brother Esau, visits his blind father and convinces his father to bless him instead of Esau. Jacob has stolen his brother's birthright, the right as the first-born son to receive his father's wealth. When Esau is refused a blessing from his father and realizes what Jacob has done, he threatens to kill Jacob. Jacob runs away, but he eventually must face what has happened at the ford at Jabbock. Jacob spends the night there, forced to wrestle with a man (some translations say that it is an angel). At daybreak, Jacob asks for a blessing from the man. The man replies, "Your name shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God, and with men, and have prevailed."

Jacob has looked at everything that makes him uncomfortable and disturbed and has looked at it face to face. For Jacob dealing with his discomfort meant struggling with God, with other human beings, and with his own conscience. Afterwards, he returns home to face his brother, and Esau welcomes him home. A gracious surprise!



I am Going, Macht's Gut!

by Georg Bussek

Twenty two months United States that sounded a lot when I first thought about it, almost two years ago. I didn't feel like going away at all. Everything was working out fine: friends, family and school. So why leave? I chose to do an alternative service in a foreign country because I figured that this would be a great chance to step out of my "normal" life and to become more independent. During my first six months I often felt homesick and I asked myself several times why I did that to myself. I didn't have any good reason to feel that way because I got great support from many people I met and the Worker Community welcomed me very friendly. Nevertheless there was this feeling.

The problem now is, that I don't feel homesick anymore and again everything is working out just fine. So why leave? Because I want to study in Germany and I know that I can't do it here. But I won't go back to Germany and go on as before, just as if this time in the USA had never happened.

I will have to move to another city in Germany and I'll start a new chapter in my life. It might sound corny but I think that the time in the USA will always be something special to me. If somebody were to ask me what I did in 1987 I probably wouldn't come up with much, but 1989 and 1990 will be special: The years I was in Des Moines, in another country where I made friends. It is a time period which will always be easy to identify and to remember.

Now that I have done it, I know that it was very important for me to get away from my family and friends to learn about myself.

This way I had to make more decisions for myself and I had far more freedom. Without having the old securities of home I learned things about myself which I had not realized or had denied before: My attitude towards God, admitting my homosexuality to myself and to others, my inconsistent behaviour and other things. I also found out what I want to do and what not, which is one of the reasons why I go back to Germany. I know for sure that I want to study. After more than one year of working at Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and at the Worker I realized that I really want to go back to school to do something which is important to me.

The question for me is how I will use what I have learned and seen in these one and a half years later on in my life and also in my job. I know that it is important for me to study acting. I don't think that there is anything wrong with that, except that there is a temptation to become passive. But I seriously hope and actually believe that my time in Des Moines has given me enough motivation which will linger on.

To all the people whom I have met and who have been supportive, I want to say thank you for the great lunch and dinner invitations (joke) and for the time we spent together. You have been the most positive experience during my time in the States and I hope to stay in touch with you. Good-bye and Auf Wiedersehn!

Your Georg!

A SPECIAL PLEDGE TO STOP U.S. WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The U.S. has contributed to the mounting crisis in the Persian Gulf with the most massive military buildup since the Vietnam War. This may lead to a major war, a permanent U.S. military presence in the region, or both. This buildup, which is costing the U.S. \$1 billion per month in its pre-war phase, comes at the expense of social programs at home and threatens the "peace dividend." Just like U.S. actions in Central America, the U.S. war in the Gulf is aimed at continuing U.S. dominance over Third World nations.

Signing the Pledge of Resistance expresses a commitment to resist efforts of the U.S. government to resolve problems with war. There are two levels of involvement—legal protests, and acts of civil disobedience. It is critically important to resist the military buildup now and to be prepared to respond to any number of possible military actions including, but not limited to, the following: a U.S. attack on Iraq and its people including air strikes, ground strikes, missiles fired from ships, or attempted assassinations; a U.S. military response to an alleged Iraqi provocation; or a U.S. military effort to retake Kuwaiti territory.

Via Pacis
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Des Moines, IA 50306

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Nonviolent Civil Disobedience Pledge

I pledge to resist U.S.
military actions in the Middle
East by joining with others in acts
of nonviolent civil disobedience
as conscience leads me!

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Affiliation/Organization _____
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State _____ Zip _____ Phone/day _____ /eve _____

The Pledge of Resistance is a nationwide organization which has opposed U.S. intervention in Central America since 1984, and continues in that effort today.

Please make your check payable to Pledge of Resistance. Mail your pledge to:
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4228 Telegraph Ave, ste 100, Oakland CA 94610, Phone (415)655-1181

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